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SPEAKER

**COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING: HOW SHOULD IT
BE APPLIED IN INDONESIAN CONTEXT**



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COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING: HOW SHOULD IT BE APPLIED IN INDONESIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is an approach which replaces the earlier structural method, called Situational Language Teaching and it was begun in Britain in the 1960s but being applied in language classes in some part of the world by teachers in the early of 1970s. In CLT, the main goal is developing the learners' communicative competence. The learners are the center of the teaching and learning process, the meaning is paramount without ignoring grammatical aspects of a language and without ignoring the cultural norms and the context of the teaching and learning. In Indonesia, communicative language teaching has been applied for several years but it does not give much impact on the success of the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in Indonesia. This paper will discuss about the problems of the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia and how CLT should be applied in Indonesian context based on the theories of CLT and communicative approach, the position of English in Indonesia itself and the tendency toward the use of English in Indonesia currently.

A. Introduction

Communicative language teaching is the teaching that is focused on developing the students' communicative competence namely developing their ability to communicate effectively in a culturally significant setting (Zainil, 1994) and places greater emphasis on the use of the foreign language in the classroom, both between teacher and students and between students (Mangubai, et al, 2005). It aims to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and develop procedures for the teaching of the four skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication (Richards & Rogers, 1986).

Someone is considered to have communicative competence if she/he has the four components of communicative competence namely grammatical competence, sociocultural competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Savignon, 1983). In relation to English language teaching and learning, a student is admitted to have the communicative competence if they have those components which can be seen

in their performance of using English in communication. It is also be applied to any countries where the teaching and learning of English is still having the status of a second language for example Singapore and India and or as a foreign language such as in Indonesia.

In Indonesia as mention before, English still has the status as a foreign language since it is still being learned, has no internal communication function and the teaching aims is to increase ease of contact with foreign language speakers outside the country (Wilkins in Zaim, 2005). In order to make Indonesian, especially the students, to have good communicative competence of English, Government of Indonesia has done several efforts in its education system. One of them is by changing and updating the curriculum so that it can be relevant with the trends and the needs of English in a global world of communication. The latest curriculum that is applied is KTSP (school-based curriculum) which is based on communicative language teaching approach. In fact, as mentioned by Zainil (2008), observations have indicated that only few English teachers practice communicative language teaching because many of them have difficulties in carrying it out in the classroom. In this paper, the writer will review some theories related to communicative language teaching, discuss about the position and the tendency of the use of English in Indonesia and how communicative language teaching should be applied in Indonesian context.

B. Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching is an approach which replaces the earlier structural method, called Situational Language Teaching and it was begun in Britain in the 1960s but applied in language classes in some part of the world by teachers in the early of 1970s (Zainil, 2008) . Richards & Rogers (1986) agree on calling it as an approach. Further, Rogers (2001) support this opinion as well by arguing that within methodology a distinction is often made between methods and approaches, in which methods are held to be fixed teaching systems with prescribed techniques and practices, whereas approaches represent language teaching philosophies that can be interpreted and applied in a variety of different ways in the classroom.

Communicative language teaching - as an approach that has been the most frequently employed - as state by Saengboon (2006), can lead to the desired outcome which indicating that learners readily develop their communicative competence on a par with that of a native speaker. The essence of communicative competence itself is to

know a language means to know how to use it correctly and appropriately in diverse social and cultural contexts. The communicative competence means the ability to use a language for communicative purposes and it has four components as stated by Canale and Swain in Mustafa (2001): first, grammatical competence that is the ability to apply rules of grammar to produce or interpret ideas to gather a message correctly; second, discourse competence, that is the ability to connect several ideas together appropriately and to maintain an extended exchanges of messages which can be achieved by getting exposed to and engaged in extended discourse in the context of communicative events; third, sociolinguistic competence, the ability to choose language usage according to the social situations which can be achieved by getting exposed to and engaged in various uses of English in a wide array of social situation and role relationships; and the last one, strategic competence that is the ability to understand basic meaning or to be understood, even when adequate vocabulary and structure are lacking and it manifest itself mostly in strategies used by communicator to avoid communication breakdown.

In addition, Richards (2006) mentions that communicative competence includes the aspect of language knowledge which consist of four aspects: firstly, knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions; secondly, knowing how to vary the use of language according to the setting and the participant; thirdly, knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts, for instance narrative, reports, interviews, conversation, etc; lastly, knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge through using different kinds of communication strategies.

From the two experts, it can be concluded that communicative competence deals with language use, language variation, language production, language understanding and maintaining language for the sake of communication. This communicative competence can be better achieved by a language learner if the contexts of the learning make use of communicative language teaching which focus on language meaning and linguistics form in context that can be carried out indirectly through reading and listening to meaningful, comprehensible language input.

Furthermore, Pica (2000) mentions that communicative language teaching de-emphasis on explicit grammar instruction and that often results in a tolerance of learners' grammatical errors and correction is reserved only for errors in the communication of message meaning. Similarly, Nunan in Saengboon (2006) mentions some aspects of communicative language teaching;

In communicative language teaching, language is viewed as a system for the expression of meaning, the activities involve oral communication, carrying out meaningful task and using language which is meaningful to the learners. Objectives reflect the needs of the learners; they included functional skills as well as linguistics objectives. The learner's role is as a negotiator and interactor, while the teacher's role is as facilitator of the communication process and the materials promote communicative language use; they are task-based and authentic.

From the aspects, it can be stated that communicative language teaching is a new way of teaching where the learners have more roles and more exposed to the real life situation of using the language for communication and has its own characteristics. The common characteristics of communicative language teaching are proposed by Saengboon (2006) as follows: first, a focus on message meaning, resulting in language lessons involving communicative functions; second, the use of authentic material; third, learner-centered and experience-based views of L2 acquisition/learning; fourth, focus on meaningful tasks in which learners play a role of negotiators of messages rather than on linguistic items; fifth, the use of pair/group activities carried out in a learner-friendly atmosphere.

It can be inferred from the characteristics that communicative language teaching has, it is an ideal approach to be implemented in an appropriate teaching and learning context where the learners are the center, the meaning is paramount without ignoring grammatical aspects of a language and without ignoring the cultural norms and the context of the teaching and learning.

C. Communicative Approach

Communicative approach is a set of principles about teaching including recommendations about method and syllabus where the focus is on meaningful communication not structure, use not usage. In this approach, students are given tasks to accomplish using language instead of studying the language. The syllabus is based primarily on functional development, not structural development. In essence, a functional syllabus replaces a structural syllabus. There is also less emphasis on error correction as fluency and communication become more important than accuracy. Authentic and meaningful language input becomes more important as well. The class becomes more student-centered as students accomplish their tasks with other students, while the teacher plays more of an observer role. In short, it can be said that communicative approach is the innovation of the foreign language teaching. Not only



does it improve students' communicative competence effectively, but also carries out the quality education in foreign language teaching.

Communicative approach has its own features, characteristics and principle. Jin (2008) states that communicative approach features are; 1) focus on meaning; 2) communicative competence is the desired goal; 3) learner-centered; 4) fluency is the primary goal; 5) students are expected to interact with other people, either in oral practice, through pair and group work, or in their writings; 6) dialogues, if used, center around communicative functions; 7) intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in what is being communicated by the language; and the last one, it is task-based.

In addition to the above features, Woosley (2004) lays out some characteristics of communicative approach that are in communicative approach; 1) both spoken and written language are important in which reading, writing, speaking and listening are all necessary parts of communicative competence; 2) language is viewed and learned within its social and cultural context and there is an emphasis on the authentic use of language, as it would be used in its real context; 3) focus is on meaning, rather than language structure, which is seen as a means of aiding the understanding and production of meaning; 4) both fluency and accuracy are important; 5) course content is based on student needs; 6) teaching is more learner-centered and students should be encouraged to contribute as much as possible; 7) the teacher becomes more a planner and facilitator of language learning activities and helping the students throughout, rather than a didactic teacher; 8) mistakes are only corrected when appropriate because to correct a student while they are communicating would hinder the main goal of successful and effective communication; 9) activities are based on real-life communication because that is what we learn; 10) activities are task-based in which language is used for a purpose to achieve such a communicative purpose; 11) course content is more relevant to students' lives so they can actually use it and are more likely to want to; 12) use of pair-work and group-work activities is common as well as individual and also teacher-led activities which means that varied types of interaction are encouraged and nurtured.

Besides having the features and the characteristics above, communicative approach also has its own principle. Jin (2008) states that communicative approach has three principles, they are; 1) the communicative principle which means that activities involving real communication to promote learning; 2) the task principle which means activities in which language is used is to carry out meaningful tasks in order to promote

learning; 3) the meaningfulness principle which means that the language should be meaningful to the learner to supports the learning process.

Similarly, Jacobs and Farrell (2001) states that communicative approach focus mainly upon; 1) greater attention on the role of the learners than on the external stimuli learners; 2) greater attention on the learning process rather than on the products; 3) greater attention on the social nature of learning rather than on students as separate; and 4) de-contextualized individuals.

In short, it can be said that communicative approach has its own features, characteristic and principles and communicative competence is taken into account which also means that learners should be able to use the language appropriate to a given social context.

D. The Position and the Tendency of Use of English in Indonesia

The position of English in Indonesia is still as a foreign language. It means that the language is not used as a medium of instruction in school and is not used as a means of communication in everyday life interaction. This status has not been changed within the last 50 years or so, as stated by Jazadi (2004) and that it would never serve any social function in Indonesia.

In addition, as a foreign language, it means that it is still being learned, has no internal communication function and the teaching aims is to increase ease of contact with foreign language speakers outside the country (Wilkins in Zaim, 2005). This opinion is supported by the elaboration made by the Ministry of Education in 1967 in Jazadi (2004) that the teaching of English as a foreign language was intended to equip students to read textbooks and references in English, to participate in class and examinations that involved foreign lecturers and students, and to introduce Indonesian culture in international areas. In furthering, this kind of general objectives was echoed in the high school English curriculum guidelines of 1975, 1984, 1994 and 2004.

From the tendency of use of English in Indonesia in educational level especially at high school level, it is directing to develop the skills of the students so that output are able to communicate and to do discourse in English at a certain literacy level. The literacy levels includes *performative*, *functional*, *informational* and *epistemic* (Depdiknas, 2006). At the level of *performative* the students are hope to be able to read, write, listen to and speak by using the language. At the level of *functional*, the students are hope to be able to use the language in daily life such reading newspapers, manual and

guidebook. At the level of *informational*, the students are hoped to be able to access knowledge and information by using the language. While, at the *epistemic* level, the students are hope to be able to present their knowledge in the target language.

In short, there are three goals of the teaching of English subject for secondary school students in Indonesia. They are; 1) to develop the communicative competence in spoken and written in order to reach the functional literary level, 2) to build the awareness on the essences and the important of English in order to improve the nation competitiveness among the global communities, and; 3) to develop the students' comprehension on the linkage of language and culture.

In further, since the adoption of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC -- *KBK*) -- then moved to School-Based Curriculum (SBC -- *KTSP*), the standard objectives of English language teaching at the secondary schools in Indonesia are determined as follows: 1) developing communication ability both in oral and in written media and the ability covers listening, speaking, reading and writing; 2) raising awareness of the nature of language, either English as a foreign language or Bahasa Indonesia as a mother tongue, by comparing those two languages; 3) developing comprehension about the relation between language and culture then enlarging culture horizon (Priyanto, 2009).

In general, there are two conclusion that can be taken; first, the position of English in Indonesia is still as a foreign language which means that the language is not used as a medium of instruction in school and is not used as a means of communication in everyday life interaction, and second; from the tendency of English use in Indonesia, it is directing to develop the skills of the students so that output are able to communicate and to do discourse in English at a certain literacy level.

E. How Communicative Language Teaching Should Be Applied in Indonesian Context?

In Indonesian context, the status of English is still as a foreign language. The tendency of English use itself, especially in the education area is directing to develop the skills of the students so that the output students are able to communicate and to do discourse in English at a certain literacy level. In relation to communicative language teaching, the essence is the engagement of learners in communication to allow them to develop their communicative competence. Another, the focus is to promote the



development of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative events (Savignon, 2000).

In order to achieve a better application of communicative language teaching in Indonesian context, people that involves in education (decision makers at government level and the teachers) should know the reality of condition of ELT in Indonesia and take this thing into consideration. Next, they should have knowledge on the communicative language teaching itself (the theory and the practice; then, they should really know the context where they will apply it (the students' characteristics and their cultural value).

Among those three, the first one which is related to the reality of condition of ELT in Indonesia as a foreign language, there are some problems exist; 1) the changing of curriculum and approach (Dardjowidjojo, 2000; Nur, 2003 in Yuwono (2005) along with the changing of the Minister of Education was not uncommon; 2) the big class sizes and teachers with poor mastery of English are two obvious factors that contribute to the ongoing problems in ELT in Indonesia (Dardjowidjojo, 2000). Other reasons for the problems are stated by Mustafa (2001): 1) limited time allocated for teaching English, 2) students do not have enough time to actually learn to speak English in class because the teacher is more concerned to teach the grammar and syntax, 3) the absence of good and authentic learning materials, and 4) the absence of the social uses of English outside the classroom. All of those problems, actually, should be taking into considerations and some should be found the solutions by the decision makers in education in Indonesia. Yuwono (2005) states that the continually-revised curriculum does not seem to take into serious considerations factors such as suitable qualifications for teachers, time availability, numbers of students, or available resources and facilities, nor does it provide strategies and alternatives should problems related to English language education occur.

The second, the educators especially the teachers should have the knowledge on communicative language teaching in relation to the theory for instance the features, the characteristic and the principle of CLT. As mention earlier, in CLT, communicative competence is the essence and the main objective, it focuses on use without ignoring the usage, the activities involve oral communication, the objectives reflect the needs of the learners, the learner's role is as a negotiator and interactor, while the teacher's role is as facilitator of the communication process and the materials promote communicative language use; they are task-based and authentic (Nunan in Saengboon, 2006). Besides,

in the practice, CLT is a process-orientation of western pedagogy, while in Indonesia the teaching is still more focus on 'product-orientation' which have been practiced for a long period of time.

The last, people that involves in education (decision makers at government level and the teachers) should really know the context where they will apply the communicative language teaching (the students' characteristics and their cultural value). CLT which is developed in a Western culture in which the learners are more independent, critical, and a better risk-taker in teaching and learning is contrary to the characteristics of the Indonesian learners and the cultural value of Indonesian have in entire of their lives. Indonesian learners with their Eastern culture are more 'collectivism', the teachers are regarded as the expert who knows everything and their words are still regard as 'final' and may not be argued.

In a narrower scope, in order to achieve a better application of CLT in Indonesia, such as in the classroom teaching and learning, the teachers should use classroom techniques of CLT and the students should apply good language learning strategies. Zainil (2008) states that there are some techniques that can be developed to achieve the objectives of CLT, that is to develop communicative competence. These techniques are; first, putting more emphasis on the use of language without ignoring the usage. When the teachers focus more on the use in their teaching, the teachers have already maximized the students' exposure to natural communication. This can be implemented by asking real questions, accepting non-verbal responses and responding to content when communicating with the students. Second, be oriented to problem solving whether in the application of the use or the usage to motivate the students to be creative. When the students solve a problem, they think of the cause and ways of solving it. If the students have done this regularly, the students will accustom to it and will think logically and systematically in facing problems in learning English. Third, giving comprehensible input in reading and listening, which means that they can understand it and therefore, the materials' difficulties should be a bit beyond their competence. This will meet the theory of input hypothesis of Krashen in (Zainil, 2008) – the 'i+1'. If their inputs are good, their other skills of English, such speaking and writing will also be improved. And the last classroom technique to develop communicative competence is by not doing direct correct correction during communication. It will be better if the teacher give only indirect correction and or let the students get correction from their peers. Fewer corrections makes the students have low anxiety in learning. They will feel relax,

no tense, not afraid of making mistakes and or very anxious. The relax condition of learning will make the student having high motivation in learning, in which at the end will bring successful in the learning process.

In addition, to achieve a better application of CLT in Indonesia in the classroom teaching and learning process, the students should apply good language learning strategies in their learning of the language. Good language learning strategies are the ways used by the learners to acquire the language successfully (Zainil, 2008). These good language learner strategies are useful for the student to study and practice. Stern in Zainil (2008) point out the following good language learning strategies, they are; 1) a personal learning style or positive learning strategies, 2) an active approach to the learning task, 3) a tolerant and outgoing approach to target language and empathy with its speakers, 4) technically know how to tackle a language, 5) strategies of experimentation and planning with the object of developing the new language into an ordered system and of revising this system progressively, 6) constantly searching for meaning, 7) willingness to use the language in real communication, 8) self monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use, 9) developing the TL more and more as a separate reference system and learning to think in it, and; 10) willingness to practice. In practicing these strategies, the student should use them continuously if the strategies work well with them, but if they don't, they can avoid using the strategies.

F. Conclusion

Communicative language teaching which focuses on developing the students' communicative competence places greater emphasis on the use of the foreign language in the classroom and aims to make communicative competence as the goal of language teaching.

In order to answer the question on how the CLT should be applied in Indonesian context, there are some knowledge the people involve in education in Indonesia should know at the first place. They should, first, know the reality of condition of ELT in Indonesia and take this thing into consideration. Next, they should have knowledge on the communicative language teaching itself (the theory and the practice); then, they should really know the context where they will apply it (the students' characteristics and their cultural value). In addition to those, in a narrower scope of teaching and learning for example in the classroom, the teachers should use

classroom techniques of CLT and the students should apply good language learning strategies in their learning to achieve the success of learning English.

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